

There has been a lot of talk in the last couple of days about how to handle this issue, and the way to handle the issue is very simple: Just take it out of the bill. It could be done with a consent agreement in the matter of a second or two. So that is what we proposed, and we have been proposing it for the last several days. Take the abortion language out of this bill. If my Republican colleagues want to get something done, just take the abortion politics out of this bill. Unfortunately, for those who want to see this trafficking bill pass, Republicans are ignoring the obvious path forward while setting a new low standard on all bipartisan business that is conducted in the Senate.

By saying that Democrats should always assume their Republican partners are just not being forthright, I guess it is our fault because time and time again, whether it is on the funding of Homeland Security or whether it is trying to solve a problem we have in the Middle East, there is always something that comes out of nowhere—something so unusual, so unbelievable that we would have 47 Senators sign a letter directed to the Ayatollah. Never in the 200 years of this body has there been this level of interference in negotiations by the President until just a few days ago.

The bottom line is this: Democratic Senators have been working in good faith on this critical legislation for years. Assuming their Republican partners were being forthright when they provided a list of changes that did not include the addition of the Hyde language, Republicans are now saying that trusting them was a mistake.

There is a clear path forward to passing this trafficking bill, which is the goal shared, I hope, by Democrats and Republicans. Republicans should work with us to remove the unrelated abortion language that has no business being in this bill. Democrats are open to any number of ways to improve the language in this bill, but it is so simple: Just take it out. Take the abortion language out.

Today, Senator LEAHY, a senior Member of this body, submitted text that omits the abortion language. One way forward would be for the Senate to adopt, not simply vote on, this text. Voting to reject the change Democrats are seeking, as Senator MCCONNELL says he wants to do today, is not a viable path forward since it does not address Democrats' concern that abortion language has no place in a bill designed to protect victims of human trafficking.

This trafficking bill could pass quickly if the abortion language were removed, as I said. We hope Republicans will do the right thing in the interest of passing this bill and will work with us to remove the completely unrelated abortion language that has no business being in this bill.

I, therefore, object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The majority leader.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I want to make sure everybody understands what has been objected to. The provision that was in the bill has been in there for 2 months. Everybody had a chance to read it. It came out of committee unanimously. No one objected to proceeding to it on the floor.

I just offered the minority an opportunity for a simple up-or-down vote to strike the provision they recently discovered, and they have objected to it.

Senator CORNYN, Senator GRASSLEY, and a number of others of you have worked very hard on this extremely important legislation. I brought it to the floor the other day, open for amendment, but we have not been able to offer any amendments because the minority doesn't want to have an open amendment process and is insisting on trying to kill this important bill because of a provision they claim somehow they missed. After its being in there for 2 months, they now suddenly find it offensive.

So where we are is we are still on the bill, and we are going to pass this bill, I assure you. I want to assure Senators CORNYN, GRASSLEY, and all the people out in America who have been clamoring for this bill—and I might ask Senator CORNYN, how many groups are there that are supporting this measure?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. If I could respond, Mr. President, there are about 200 different law enforcement and victims' rights organizations, including the one from the chart I mentioned earlier, the Coalition Against Trafficking of Women. This is one of those rare subjects where people have genuinely come together in revulsion to this terrible crime but also in an attempt to do something meaningful to address it.

Mr. MCCONNELL. So what I want to say to those groups is that we are going to stay on this bill until we pass it. I have offered the minority an opportunity to have an up-or-down vote to take out the provision they have suddenly discovered is offensive to them even after having it in the bill for 2 months. Even the most casual observer would have to conclude that the minority is going to great lengths to prevent the Senate from even doing business on things that are overwhelmingly supported. But I will say this to everybody out there who cares about this bill: We are going to stay on it until we finish it.

I yield the floor.

VOTE ON HART NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Christopher A. Hart, of Colorado, to be Chairman of the National Transportation Safety Board for a term of two years?

Mr. INHOFE. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER) and the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) are necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 97, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 70 Ex.]

YEAS—97

Alexander	Flake	Murray
Ayotte	Franken	Nelson
Baldwin	Gardner	Paul
Barrasso	Gillibrand	Perdue
Bennet	Graham	Peters
Blumenthal	Grassley	Portman
Blunt	Hatch	Reed
Booker	Heinrich	Reid
Boozman	Heitkamp	Risch
Brown	Heller	Roberts
Burr	Hirono	Rounds
Cantwell	Hoeven	Sasse
Capito	Inhofe	Schatz
Cardin	Isakson	Schumer
Carper	Johnson	Scott
Casey	Kaine	Sessions
Cassidy	King	Shaheen
Coats	Kirk	Shelby
Cochran	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Collins	Lankford	Sullivan
Coons	Leahy	Tester
Corker	Lee	Thune
Cornyn	Manchin	Tillis
Cotton	Markey	Toomey
Crapo	McCaIn	Udall
Cruz	McCaskill	Vitter
Daines	McConnell	Warner
Donnelly	Menendez	Warren
Durbin	Merkley	Whitehouse
Enzi	Mikulski	Wicker
Ernst	Moran	Wyden
Feinstein	Murkowski	
Fischer	Murphy	

NOT VOTING—3

Boxer Rubio Sanders

The nomination was confirmed.

VOTE ON DINH-ZARR NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Tho Dinh-Zarr, of Texas, to be a Member of the National Transportation Safety Board for the remainder of the term expiring December 31, 2018?

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motions to reconsider are considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's actions.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will resume legislative session.

JUSTICE FOR VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING ACT OF 2015—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk for the committee-reported amendment.